

Cyberspace Technology Now Available To All 100TH Soldiers

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Through major technology, access to data affecting all Reservists is now possible through the availability of key information by walking into a public library. By a soldier investing one hour in establishing his link to this new technology the empowerment is tremendous. A big advantage is availability: nearly 24 hours a day, 7 days a week!

Not every TPU soldier in the 100th has a personal computer at home or one at work that can even be used for personal use. However, wherever there are computers with internet access, such as a public library, the soldier can gain information about his military past, current status and to some degree, chart his future military progression.

It has been mandated by the Department of the Army all soldiers will have an active account with the Army Knowledge On-Line (AKO) system by October 1, 2002. This key access portal enables the soldier to have free e-mail and keep up with training opportunities including free on line computer classes. There are numerous features that are user friendly that relate to the level of military rank, interests and responsibilities. Complete details and instructions on setting up the account are located at www.us.army.mil.

Perhaps the most encompassing account for the soldier is within the Army Reserve Personnel Command (AR-PERSCOM) in St. Louis. Several years ago soldiers worked with their unit administrators to purge individual personnel files. Key documents were sent to AR-PERSCOM to build a database on each soldier. The result is the www.2Xcitizen.usarmy.mil site for reservists to track key personnel data. The site includes all personnel evaluations, military occupational specialty training and serves as a virtual library for the soldier's military career.

The second most important account to establish is the myPay account. The myPay system is considered a very

Class Terry Sciortino, Finance Non-Commissioned Officer for the 100th Division. He states, "This is an innovative, automated system that puts the TPU soldier in control of processing certain discretionary pay data forms without reliance on paper forms." This site has unique personalized information available to assist the Reservist in making sure all key data (address, phone, cell, fax, pager information) is correct. Any changes in the data can be verified 3-7 days after the soldier's data entry. Among the features are instant viewing and printing the last three months of leave and learning statements (LES), dependents' deduction changes, financial allotments, timely W-2 forms, etc...

The myPay system has expansion capabilities to bring on line new programs offered by the Department of Defense. The recently launched Thrifts Savings Plan can now be accessed and changes in deductions, level of participation can all be made electronically during Open Season enrollment.

Earlier this year, the Office of Personnel Management offered military members and key family members the opportunity to participate in the federally sponsored Long Term Care Plan. Plans are being developed to allow deductions for premiums for this new benefit to be shown on the leave and earnings statement (LES). Savings bonds participation changes and the ability to print federal tax statements on line are also features of the myPay system. For reservists in heavy travel status, relief is available to clear up confusion, multiple forms and hassle and timely deposit for travel advances and/or deposits.

myPay was formerly known as Employee Member Self Service or E/MSS, and is still run by Defense Finance and Accounting Service. The name changed in mid-October.

Sgt. First Class Darren Patterson, Public Affairs Supervisor for the 100th Division, says "The system is refined enough I can see my fragmented Annual Training LES two weeks ahead of the date certain for automatic deposit; a really helpful tool in budgeting and cash flow management". As a former banker, Patterson is especially concerned about system security and is impressed with steps the Department of Defense has taken to ensure complete privacy. Actually the unique combination of the soldier's social security number, personal identification number and specific telephone number used to access makes it as secure as using an automated teller machine at a bank. For example, users of the system must use a browser with secure socket layers protocol with a 128 bit strong encryption. This combination prevents information from being retrieved by a third party while it is being transmitted. This account set up procedures can be accessed at www.dfas.mil. It is important to note the minimum browser needed to make this account work is Netscape Navigator version 4.06 or later, Netscape Communicator, or Microsoft Internet Explorer version 4.0 or later.

All of this technology brings the Army Reserve soldier into the world of cyberspace in a user-friendly manner. Work continues to improve to systems, software and infrastructure to support the shift to AKO and other on-line resources.



myPay: The Key to Controlling Your Pay